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AP US History

Chapter 1 Questions

1) What was North America like at the time of Columbus?

North America was the home of many millions of people before Columbus arrived. The pre-Columbian Americans spread throughout the Western Hemisphere and created large and advanced civilizations. The most advanced were the Aztecs with their accomplishment with their educational and medical systems, the Mayans with a written language and numerical system, and the Incans and their vast empire. The North American natives were less advanced than the ones in Mexico and Central America but they created complex and varied civilizations that had helped them exist for a long time. It was thriving with life, the tribes in the Great Plains region grew crops that helped sustain them and there were languages that had been developed between the different tribes. They all had developed interesting cultures, some harsh, some calm, they all believed in some type of God whether it was the God of war, or a God of crops, they all had a unique religion.

2) What were the elements of biological and cultural exchange occurring between Europeans and Native Americans?

Since the crossing of Christopher Columbus, Europeans had crossed off into the New World and had interacted with the natives. Some biological/cultural changes were diseases that were introduced to the natives, since they had never had the disease equaling no immunity many had died and it caused a demographic catastrophe. The diseases helped the Spanish conquistadores take over the Aztecs, Mayans, and Incans or tribes in Mexico and a part of Central America as they became weakened by them and stood no chance later. The Spanish destroyed nearly everything to bring the Indian control to the Spanish. Not all of these encounters were all bad though, they both learned of new things, the Europeans were introduced important new crops and new agricultural techniques they revolutionized European agriculture so much that the gold and silver ultimately they were less important than the new things they gained, the Indian tribes were able to domesticate animals. The Indians adopted many features of European civilization but they changed on the way, they learned new languages and new religions. Also intermarriage between the Spanish and natives (mostly around Mexico and Central America, some parts of southern NA) happened for many different reasons, a social pyramid of pure Spanish at the top, mixed race at the middle, natives at the bottom.

3) What changes were taking place in Western Europe that resulted in widespread interest in colonization?

One reason for the interest is that it was new, America was the perfect place where human settlement could start anew, make an ideal or perfect society. A major reason was mercantilism, so that they could gain lots of wealth so that they could be the most powerful nation. Another reason was some religious groups seeking religious freedom. The main one was mercantilism, as all of the European nations desired, so that they could be the most wealthiest. Several companies were made to accomplish that goal, for example: the Muscovy Company (1555), the Guinea Company (1588), etc. People from each nation were sent to take resources from America to help with this goal, some examples are the Spanish mining for gold/silver, the French hunting for fur. Richard Hakluyt agreed with colonization, it could help out with poor/unemployed people, they were to be sent to America to create colonies. Many Puritan Separatists let after James I took the throne in England because the antagonized the Puritans by resorting to arbitrary taxation and by favoring English Catholics.

4) What were the major motivations for those leaving Europe to settle in America and what different types of colonies were established?

The major motivations for leaving Europe are very much the interests mentioned in question three. The major motivation was for a clean/new slate and mercantilism. Anyways, one type of colony were the Irish (the English’s “barbaric” population) which was sent by the English to bring to the New World to encounter the natives living there, which was successful...with some casualties that made the English make an assumption about colonization: to keep away from the natives living there. Even though the Spanish were there, they made no serious attempt to colonize at all, their reason for being there was for the gold and silver. The French however founded its first permanent settlement in America at Quebec. They were there to mainly take resources but they also settled there too, their main natural resource was fur so the fur trade was their way to get wealth, also they established deep ties with the natives at the heart of America. The Dutch were also in America, since they won their independence from Spain, they were one of the leading trading nations of the world. Their merchant fleet was larger than England’s and their trades were active in Europe, Africa, Asia and (increasingly) America. The Dutch hired an English explore called Henry Hudson and he sailed up the river (that was going to be named after him) in what is now NY, which led to a Dutch claim on territory in America. They made a trading company there (the Dutch West India Company) and made a number of permanent trading posts on the Hudson, Delaware, and Connecticut. Their part in colonization is that they (company) encouraged people from Holland, Germany, Sweden, and Finland to come and settle in America though only a small amount came and they were loosely united with generally weak leadership. The English had worser luck in colonization, after the English’s nationalism grew a few attempts to colonize their had failed. Fortunately after some time two new groups had tried again, the London group had exclusive rights to colonize in the south, the same for the Plymouth merchants except they had rights to the north; with them they were the first English colonies in America.

5) Describe the origins of the African slave trade in general and the origins of African slaves being brought to America in specific.

The African slave trade began long before the European migration to the New World, as early as the eight century A.D., west Africans sold slaves to traders from the Mediterranean. They were responding to a demand from rich families who wanted black men/women as domestic servants and to general labor shortages in some parts of Europe and North Africa. Next was when the Portuguese sailors began exploring Africa they bought slaves where there was a small but steady demand for slaves. In the 16th century, the demand for sugar rose high up and in the small areas of sugar cultivation in the Mediterranean were proving inadequate, so they needed more workers to rise to demand for sugar and that’s when the slaves come in. European slave traders increased the recruitment of workers from along the coast from west (and east) Africa, African kingdoms warred with each other to produce more slaves, the rising slave trader eventually became to be the English and slavery spread to the Caribbean and South America and into the English colonies to the north.